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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000312

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - GOK CABINET RESIGNATION

REF: KUWAIT 307

1. (U) Following the late afternoon resignation of the Kuwaiti cabinet on March 17 (Reftel), the Kuwaiti press the next morning focused on what the event might mean for the country's short-term political future. In banner headlines, the ten Arabic-language and three English-language daily newspapers reviewed government-parliamentary tensions leading up to the resignation and speculated on whether the Amir would dissolve parliament and call for new elections. In general, the press provided measured non-inflammatory coverage of the sudden event. Only one English-language daily used the word "crisis" in its headline to describe the current situation. Most editorials speculated that the Amir would dissolve parliament and call for new elections. However, many also questioned whether this would relieve the sense of political stalemate felt throughout much of the country. Sample March 18 headlines include:

'The government hesitated, stumbled and then collapsed, Al-Rai.

'Eight reasons pushed the government to resign. Early Elections with Five electoral districts,' Al-Qabas.

'Possible unconstitutional dissolution of the Parliament and formation of a National Rescue Government,' Al-Seyassah.

'The Government Resigned; Fed up with the MPs,' Al-Watan.

'The government resigned. Solution is contingent upon the success or failure of efforts to bring the two branches together,' Al-Anbaa.

'The Amir cut short his holiday and comes back to the country because of the resignation of the government,' Al-Jarida.

'Cabinet resigns in fresh crisis,' Arab Times.

'The government shaken by MPs' infractions,' Al-Wasat.

2. (U) The political editor of the moderate Arabic-language daily Al Qabas pessimistically opined that the resignation shows that the effective balance of powers between the executive and legislative branches is no longer working as they once did. Block quote: "The core of the crisis is the dysfunctional relationship between the National Assembly and the government. This is also the reason behind the collapse of the balance of powers that has until now governed the country's affairs. Unless a change is made to resolve this rift, the problem will continue and reappear over and over again in different shapes even if the assembly were dissolved and a new parliament elected."

13. (U) The pro-government Arabic-language daily Al-Anbaa summed up the pessimism expressed by many over the possibility of any near-term resolution and looked to the Amir for leadership. Block quote: "[The government's resignation] is an opportunity for the government and the leadership to reconsider all the political options available to them. However, we share the sense of pessimism among some people regarding recent political developments. But we trust that our leadership has the wisdom and ability to resolve this issue."

14. (U) The new Arabic-language daily Awan summed up a prevailing question as to whether a new election, even based on Kuwait's new electoral districts, would necessarily end the tension between the government and the legislature. Block quote: "Certainly elections based on the five electoral constituencies would introduce a new era. Many old faces in the current parliament would disappear and new ones would arrive on the scene. From the past we know that elections generally result in one half of the new parliament being new faces. This time, with the new districts, that number might be even bigger. But the question remains, would the bad performance of this parliament simply become the traditions of the new one?" The moderate liberal Arabic Daily Al-Jarida repeated this pessimism. Block quote: "The resignation of the government will reoccur and the dissolution of the parliament will be repeated so long as we have hands insisting on spreading the wind so the country harvests the storm [referring to conservatives MPs whom the paper sees as blocking cooperation and progress]."

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